

Mini Lesson #29: Thesis Statements

1. Definition:

A **thesis statement** is a sentence that:

- makes a promise about the scope, purpose, and direction of the paper.
- captures the whole argument in one sentence usually near the end of the introduction.
- is focused and specific enough to be proven within the paper.
- provides a *framework* for the paper.

2. Working and Final Theses:

There is an important distinction between a **working** and a **final** thesis.

A **working thesis** guides the writer's investigation into the subject and suggests questions, problems, and strategies. It is useful in early drafts.

A **final thesis** should be present in the final draft. It generally comes late in the writing process, and it is the result of revisions done to the working thesis.

3. What does a thesis do?:

For the *writer*, the working thesis statement:

- ✍ serves as a planning tool.
- ✍ helps the writer determine the paper's focus.
- ✍ becomes a reference point for all topic sentences in support of the argument.
- ✍ anticipates questions about the topic.

For the *reader*, the thesis statement:

- 📖 serves as a "map" to follow through the paper.
- 📖 keeps the reader focused on the argument
- 📖 engages the reader in the argument.
- 📖 offers enough detail for the reader to grasp the argument.

4. Topic -vs.- Argument:

A **topic** introduces the subject of an essay. An **argument** takes the topic further by taking a stand and giving reasons for the stance. Here is an example:

A key issue in America today is wealth and poverty. ☞ This is a topic. Here are two better ways to state a thesis about this topic:

- 1) Through hard work, millions of Americans who were born poor have achieved prosperity for themselves and their families; today, America is an economically mobile country.
- 2) Once we tried to help poor Americans; today, though we are richer than ever before, we blame the poor for their poverty and enact policies that will keep them poor.

5. Thesis Worksheet:

- In one word, what is the topic of your paper? _____
- Which aspect(s) of this topic are you going to talk about? (Specific!)

- What are you going to prove about this topic? What is your argument?

- How can your argument be proven? Convince your reader that your argument is true and right! Use strong and solid reasons.

- At this point, you know your topic, your argument, and your evidence for your argument. Put your argument with your evidence, and this will serve as your working thesis.

REMEMBER!!!

A well-written thesis goes beyond the obvious and discovers what it is you have to say.

Sources:

<http://www.rpi.edu/web/writingcenter/thesis.html>

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/thesis.html>

☞ this Mini-Lesson was created by Elena C. Alvarado-Peters and Lauren Delagrange ☞